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DEPARTMENT FOR A/S FRIED, NSC FOR ANSLEY

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/06/2021
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [TU](#)
SUBJECT: TURKEY: SCHEDULING VISITS AND SIDESTEPPING POLITICS

Classified By: Ambassador Ross Wilson for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Prime Minister Erdogan and Foreign Minister Gul have expressed their strong interest in visiting Washington in the coming months. The lack of coordination between their requests may well indicate behind the scenes friction. The two are partners, but also rivals. The PM's staff highlights his interest in being, and being seen by Turks to be, in sync with the U.S. on Iran and consulting on the formation of the P-5/EU-3 strategy as the process unfolds. There is also increasing talk in Turkey of early parliamentary elections this fall, a process we need to steer well clear of. To ensure that we stay above the fray of these internal political machinations, while also advancing our dialogue on Iran, Iraq and other issues of considerable promise, we propose the following approach:

-- Secretary Rice issues an invitation to FM Gul to come to Washington during July or August. This would allow for more intensive consultations on Iran while also pressing forward in a concrete way on the Strategic Dialogue we are now launching.

-- White House staff consider possible dates for an Erdogan meeting with POTUS in the fall. We should convey our intention to meet with him as soon as possible, perhaps through a POTUS phone call whose main purpose would be to reinforce Turkish good behavior on Iran.

The political situation in Turkey is heating up and that makes our continuing high-level engagement all the more important. But we must do so in a way that minimizes the potential for -- and the profile of -- distorted claims of favoritism or manipulation.

12. (C) MFA Deputy Secretary Tuygan called Ambassador June 6 to follow-up a discussion Turkish Ambassador Sensoy had with EUR Assistant Secretary Fried on June 5. Tuygan understood Fried to suggest the above scenario. Tuygan said he had discussed the matter further with FM Gul and the Prime Ministry and that Turkey's priority remains an early visit by PM Erdogan. While acknowledging this GOT request, we believe that the appropriate way to proceed is what we've suggested above. Setting a date now for an Erdogan visit in the fall will help the Turks accept this and help steer our dialogue in constructive directions -- especially on Iran and Iraq.

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WILSON